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RUSKIN'S PRE-RAPHAELITISM
& OTHER ESSAYS & LECTURES
ON ART WITH INTRODUC-
TION BY LAURENCE BINYON

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IN TWO STYLES OF BINDING, CLOTH, FLAT BACK, COLOURED TOP, AND LEATHER, ROUND CORNERS, GILT TOP.

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**ART HAS
MANY USES
AND MANY
PLEASANT-
NESSES
MODERN PAINTERS**

PRE-RAPHAELITISM
LECTURES ON
ARCHITECTURE
& PAINTING: &c
BY JOHN
RUSKIN



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INTRODUCTION

IN this volume is collected together most of Ruskin's writing on Pre-Raphaelitism, with some other matter of congruous interest. The essay which stands first, and bears this title, was published in 1851. It was an answer to the violent attacks made in the Press on the first exhibited pictures of the three original members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, Holman Hunt, Millais, and Rossetti. The lectures on Architecture and Painting, which follow, were delivered at Edinburgh in 1853, and published in the following year. The volume concludes with the Academy Notes issued every year from 1855 to 1859, and mainly concerned with the pictures of the Pre-Raphaelite school and its growing influence on other painters.

We need not here be concerned with Ruskin's personal relation to the artists of the Brotherhood. It is enough to record that the movement was quite independent in its origin. The public championship of the famous author of "Modern Painters" helped the young painters in their early struggle against hostile criticism, as his personal friendship helped them privately ; but each pursued his own path, little influenced by Ruskin's criticisms, which sometimes, as in the note on Millais' "Sir Isumbras," proved strangely unsympathetic. The pages which follow are more concerned with what Ruskin conceived to be Pre-Raphaelite principles than with the actual works of the English artists, principles which he was able to illustrate not only from English painting but from the French architects of the Middle Ages.

Pre-Raphaelitism is a term that, like most other terms in *ism*, has been variously interpreted. In the public mind it is associated with two main attributes, a minute particularity of method in painting, and a poetic or romantic temper. But these two main characteristics were soon, in the history of the school, to become separated, one group of artists being dominated by one side of the tradition set up, and another group by the other ; so that such diverse works as John Brett's "Aosta" and Burne-Jones' "Mirror of Venus" have both been regarded as Pre-Raphaelite.

To debate as to which artists have been really faithful to the original principles of the Brotherhood is a sterile exercise. But it may be of use and interest to examine the history of the movement, and to see which of its inspiring ideas were of most value in that renewal of English painting it admittedly achieved.

One leading idea with the youthful group who originally formed the Brotherhood was the idea, so often proclaimed by reformers in various fields, of a "return to Nature." Now, that Art should return to Nature is, strictly speaking, a ridiculous notion ; the two are in antithesis ; and, logically carried out, the proposition would mean that Art should give up its reason for existing. The cry has indeed proved a misleading and mischievous one for those who have allowed theory to dominate instinct. Ruskin in "Modern Painters" had, before the formation of the Brotherhood, exhorted artists to walk with Nature, "rejecting nothing, selecting nothing, and scorning nothing." We shall see, however, that he afterwards, when the Pre-Raphaelites had exhibited work which professed to bear out such principles, warned them that as long as they painted only from nature, "however carefully selected and grouped," their pictures could never have the character of the highest kind of compositions. But for all that the idea had value and bore fruit. For in all such movements as those we are considering it is a natural tendency to run to extremes, and the instinct of the artist controls and modifies his carrying out of a theory which, though it may not be logically sound, brings with it a wholesome stimulus. The new movement in poetry inaugurated by Wordsworth forms an almost exact parallel to that of the Pre-Raphaelites in painting. The homeliness and baldness in Wordsworth's early poems, the strained stiffness and angularity in Millais' early pictures, originated in a like principle of revolt from accepted canons of the day, and provoked the same violent denunciation. In either case, these were but symptoms in exaggeration of a desire for absolute sincerity of imagination. Having to conceive a scene or an action, they will abate nothing of what is likely to have really happened ; they are intent on imagining reality, not on the arrangement of their material according to so-called "rules of art," suppressing this or that as unpleasant or wanting in dignity ; they rely on the substantial value of what they have to utter

or depict, and the whole-hearted intensity of their expression of it. It is in this sense only that such movements are a return to Nature.

Sincerity, then, to speak in the broadest terms, was the aim and the achievement of the school. But now we must point out that the same good effect might have been attained by painters working on a quite different method. If, for instance, in the mid-nineteenth century a Velasquez had appeared in England, and a new "Surrender of Breda" been exhibited, what a revolution would it not have caused! That masterpiece is broadly painted, but the absolute veracity and naturalness of it, from which it derives a dignity that no inflated art could ever attain, would have formed a new starting point and condemned for ever concocted compositions doing duty for historical painting. Later on, the work of Velasquez was to attract and leave its impress upon Millais; but at the outset the Brotherhood adopted as a principle the method of unsparing and accurate particularity. Assuredly this was no necessary element in the renewal of English art which they desired. It is, I imagine, generally supposed that this method was a revival of the method of primitive art, and that it was on the strength of this revival that the Brotherhood adopted the name Pre-Raphaelite. As a matter of fact, the young painters knew almost nothing of Italian art before Raphael. The sight and study of engravings after the early frescoes in the Campo Santo at Pisa, gave them a fruitful hint and stimulus; but it was in the direction of a happy *naïveté* and simplicity of representation, not in the direction of realism in detail. There is indeed delightful detail in some of the early Italian painters, such as Fra Angelico, but it is represented in symbol rather than in actuality. A few flowers, each precisely drawn, symbolise the profusion of a flowering field; a few leaves, each precisely drawn, symbolise the intricate foliage of a branch. But such detail as we see in the backgrounds of the English Pre-Raphaelites is essentially a northern thing; and in Giotto, the greatest of Italian Primitives, it is entirely absent. Moreover, it is significant that Mr. Holman Hunt has expressly repudiated the idea that the movement was a revival of, or a return to, medieval art. In Mr. Hunt's eyes, most of Rossetti's work and the work of painters deriving from his inspiration was a falling away from true Pre-Raphaelite

Introduction

principles into an archaism parallel to that of the German mediævalists, Overbeck and his school. In the work of Burne-Jones, as in that of Puvis de Chavannes, we do find detail rendered in the manner of the fifteenth-century Italians, with congruity and felicity.

According to Mr. Hunt, the method of the Brotherhood was simply the inevitable result of going to Nature, and of representing the earth as it is in the beauty of the actual sunlight. Certainly, in the pursuit of this endeavour, they brought new beauties into the world of painting. They refreshed the sight of men by their intense and vivid observation. But their way was only one way, it was not the only way of seeing Nature. A little later was to be born another movement, usually accepted as the antithesis of Pre-Raphaelitism the movement called Impressionism. Now, though apparently so opposed to the Pre-Raphaelites, the artists of the later school appealed just as confidently to the authority of Nature. If the paintings of both schools were lost, historians might easily have inferred from recorded expressions of theory, that the paintings of Holman Hunt and of Claude Monet were of entirely similar character. Both schools professed to paint just what they saw ; but while the Pre-Raphaelite strove to paint a scene as it is, the Impressionist aimed at representing it as it appears ; the one delineated objects, the other rendered the image of things, in their envelope of atmosphere, as impressed on the retina of the eye. The earlier school emphasized one set of truths ; the later another set. But both appealed to Nature.

“The artist,” says Reynolds, “who flatters his own indolence, will continually find himself evading this active exertion [of studying the whole effect of his design] and applying his thoughts to the ease and laziness of highly finishing the parts.” Reynolds is careful not to condemn minute detail absolutely ; but he points out the great danger of a devotion to it. Ruskin, too, with all his natural love of accurate fineness in art, saw this danger, as we see in his exhortations to J. F. Lewis to adopt a broader and more rapid method. Lewis, we may remember, had been exhibiting pictures of the finest precision of detail for years before the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was formed. But Lewis effected no such powerful renewal of the life of art as did Millais, Hunt, and Rossetti. Nor would a score of such painters as Lewis, for all the immense and fine accomplishment of his work.

What, then, was the really potent and vitalising factor in the movement? It was the imaginative power which informed the Pre-Raphaelites, a power sustained with ardour and intensity through all the effort of high finish which they carried into every corner of their pictures. When the freshness of the inspiring idea flagged, or when lesser talents worked merely with the idea of fidelity to Nature, the result was a tame and tiresome laboriousness.

But we must not be led into the mistake of condemning the Pre-Raphaelite method. Its value lay, however, not, as was claimed for it, in superior exactness of representation, or in scientific completeness, but rather in its imaginative uses. In such a picture as Millais' "Ophelia," for example, I think our pleasure is far less in realising how marvellously each wild-rose petal, each blade of reed, and the feathery intricacy of willow-sprays are rendered, than in the sense of something strange and vivid, "the glory and the freshness of a dream." The most exquisite observation, the daintiest skill, alone and of themselves could never have produced this effect, which nevertheless is inseparable from the means by which it was attained. And now take another instance, Rossetti's large pen-drawing of "Hamlet and Ophelia." Every inch of background and accessories is filled with detail; and here it is not observed, but imagined detail. Just that intensity of effect which it produces on the mind could have been produced in no other way.

Keats, in one of his letters, suggests that poets 'should have distinctness for their luxury.' And in his own poems we see to what glorious use this distinctness in rendering or imagining of fine detail can be put. In the early poems of Tennyson, and in some of Browning, too, we find verse which seems like a rendering into another medium of a Pre-Raphaelite picture. But these poets made no profession of the study of Nature as an ideal.

So far, then, as the movement was productive of value for later art, this close study of Nature, considered as such, counted much less than one might suppose on first thoughts. Ruskin, to whom we must now return, does indeed in his first essay on Pre-Raphaelitism lay immense stress on this side of the movement. He relates the work of the young painters to that of Turner, for whom he claimed that he had illustrated, as none other in art, every phase and aspect of the world of Nature. Turner, according to Ruskin, was the first and greatest of Pre-

Raphaelites. (Later critics have proclaimed him the first and greatest of Impressionists.) But after a time we find something of a change in the critic's attitude.

Ruskin had inborn in him a gift for the fine perception of detail in nature and in art such as no man's has ever surpassed. When he describes the form and colour of the mosses and lichens that he loved, we see them as we never saw them before, as if in a vivid beam, with purified and heightened powers of sight. This faculty of inexhaustible sensitiveness to the beauty, and trained perception of the significance, of Nature's minute handiwork, quickened perpetually by a subtle and powerful intelligence and allied to a corresponding gift for expression in language, was one of the most distinctive faculties of his genius. He could not but welcome delightedly such work as the first masterpieces of the Brotherhood, appealing as they did so strongly to this instinct in him. Ruskin was eminent first as a naturalist, and geology was as much a passion with him as architecture or painting.

And yet if we read the criticisms in the *Academy Notes*, here reprinted, we shall, I think, be struck more by his warnings against excess of detail than by his insistence on the beauty of it. Ruskin soon found that the success of the school produced imitators, who could copy the industry of its method but not its imaginative intensity. Moreover, with all his fondness for minute precision, he had no prejudice against broad and summary brushwork; no one admired more than he the rapid sweep of Tintoret's hand.

In the lectures on Architecture and Painting Ruskin admirably and finally puts the truth about detail and finish in art. Fine convention stops short of the whole truth, he says, but never falsifies. This is the criterion, not the greater or the less degree of realisation and completeness. In these lectures we find a further stage in the development of the writer's mind.

He finds in the Pre-Raphaelites—and now he insists more on the temper in which their work was done than on the method of it—an affinity with the spirit of the medieval artists who built and carved the great cathedrals. He begins to express the dissatisfaction with the ideals of the Renaissance and all its heritage, the belief that with the Middle Ages had been lost something of precious worth for art and life, to which his later writings bear such eloquent witness and with which were bound

up his growing ideas of social reform. It may be perfectly true as Mr. Holman Hunt has claimed, that there was no thought of a turning back to medieval aspirations in the initial phase of Pre-Raphaelitism ; it is none the less true that the movement, as continued through Rossetti into the work of Burne-Jones and William Morris (whether we call it by the name adopted by the Brotherhood or not matters little), has been fruitful and far-reaching beyond any other such movement, inducing a change in the whole outlook on life and humanity, as well as on art, by its re-discovery and resumption of ideals which the Renaissance had broken off and overshadowed.

And in this no one bore so prominent a part or exercised so profound an influence as Ruskin. The Renaissance to him—I speak of his maturer writings—expressed arrogance and materialism, the self-glorification of man. It bequeathed, or seemed to him to bequeath, a conception of art as something exotic in life, an affair of collectors and museums, a pleasure for the rich and the few. Against this conception he pleaded with all his soul for art that should be a living and spontaneous growth, flowering in the daily life of men and beautifying all we make and use.

Ruskin was a great spirit, and a great writer. But it is useless not to recognise his faults and limitations. Caprice was always imperilling his judgment. We all know, we are all irritated or perplexed by, his astonishing judgments on particular artists ; we think of Michel Angelo disparaged, Rembrandt depreciated, Claude belittled, Constable contemned, Crome ignored ; we remember the extravagances in his praise of Turner and Tintoret, the preference of men like William Hunt to men like Girtin, and the thousand self-contradictions of his wayward genius ; and we feel sometimes inclined to ask ourselves whether this man can be a safe guide in anything. Yet let us remember also that no great critic—and great critics are rarer even than great creators—but has delivered extraordinary judgments upon particular men. It may well happen that an artist or a writer, who cannot count for the world above the second-rate, supplies to the imaginative critic's mind just the germ or stimulus for which it was waiting, and comes therefore to be valued by him out of all true proportion. Ruskin's faults are bound up and entwined with his excellences. He had not, I think, a very profound sympathy with the creative instinct of

the artist ; but this want is but the weakness of a wonderful gift for observation and analysis. Allied to his sympathy with the medieval spirit was his strange lack of sense for the beauty of the nude human form, that central theme of Renaissance art. He had an incomparable sense for the beauty of clouds and streams and rocks and flowers, but confessed that he saw no beauty in a horse. His nature was one of the utmost rarity, and of great singularity. But let all his faults be summed, and all his caprices weighed, nothing will take from him his power to spur, to kindle, to illuminate ; his criticism of art will always interest because it 'brought everything to a root in human passion or human hope' : he wrote of things that live, and he made their life more precious to us by his writings ; he moves us because he is moved, and the more deeply that through all his sense of the beauty in the world and in the works of man vibrates no less passionately a sense of the wrong, the deformity, and the pain in both. *It is written "in the sweat of thy brow," but it was never written "in the breaking of thy heart" thou shalt eat bread* : in such sentences as this, upon the first page of the present volume, we come to the very heart of Ruskin ; and who that has listened to it can ever lose from his mind the voice of that burning pity and generous indignation ?

LAURENCE BINYON.

February 1906.

The following is a list of Ruskin's published works :—

Ruskin's first printed writings were contributions to the "Magazine of Natural History," 1834-6, and poems in "Friendship's Offering," 1835. Oxford prize poem, "Salsette and Elephanta," 1839.

"Modern Painters," Vol. I. 1843; 2nd ed., 1844; 3rd. ed., 1846—later ones followed; Vol. II., 1846; Vol. III., 1856; Vol. IV., 1856; Vol. V., 1860. Selections from "Modern Painters" have been published under the titles of "Frondes Agrestes," 1875; "In Montibus Sanctis," 1884; "Coeli Enarrant," 1885.

"Seven Lamps of Architecture," 1849; second edition, 1855. "The Scythian Guest," 1849 (from "Friendship's Offering"); "Poems," 1850 (from "Friendship's Offering"); "Amaranth," "London Monthly Miscellany," "Keepsake," Heath's "Book of Beauty," with others not previously printed). "Stones of Venice," Vol. I., 1851; second edition, 1858; Vol. II., 1853; second edition, 1867; Vol. III., 1853; second edition, 1867. "The King of the Golden River," 1851; "Notes on the Construction of Sheepfolds,"

1851; "Examples of the Architecture of Venice," 1851; "Pre-Raphaelitism," 1851; "The National Gallery," 1852; "Giotto and his works in Padua," 3 parts, 1853, 1854, 1860; "Lectures on Architecture and Painting," 1854, 1855; "The Opening of the Crystal Palace," 1854; Pamphlet for the preservation of Ancient Buildings and Landmarks, 1854; "Notes on the Royal Academy," No. I., 1855 (three editions); No. II., 1856 (six editions); No. III. (four editions), 1857 (two editions); Nos. IV., V. and VI., 1858, 1859, 1875; "The Harbours of England," 1856, 1857, 1859; "Notes on the Turner Gallery at Marlborough House," 1856-7 (several editions in 1857); "Catalogue of the Turner Sketches in the National Gallery," 1857 (two editions); "Catalogue of Turner's Drawings," 1857-8; "The Elements of Drawing," 1857 (two editions); "The Political Economy of Art," 1857, published in 1880 as "A Joy for Ever"; "Inaugural Addresses at the Cambridge School of Art," 1858; "The Geology of Chamouni," 1858; "The Oxford Museum," 1859; "The Unity of Art," 1859; "The Two Paths," 1859; "Elements of Perspective," 1859; "Tree Twigs," 1861; "Catalogue of Turner Drawings presented to the Fitzwilliam Museum," 1861; "Unto this Last," 1862 (from the "Cornhill Magazine"); "Forms of the Stratified Alps of Savoy," 1863; "The Queen's Gardens," 1864; "Sesame and Lilies," 1865 (two editions); "The Ethics of the Dust," 1866; "The Crown of Wild Olive," 1866 (two editions); "War," 1866; "Time and Tide," 1867; "Leoni, a legend of Italy," 1868 (from "Friendship's Offering"); "Notes on the Employment of the Destitute and Criminal Classes," 1868; "References to Paintings in illustration of Flamboyant Architecture," 1869; "The Mystery of Life and its Arts" (afternoon lectures), 1869; "The Queen of the Air," 1869 (two editions); "The Future of England," 1870; "Samuel Prout," 1870 (from "The Art Journal"); "Verona and its Rivers," 1870; "Lectures on Art," 1870; "Drawings and Photographs illustrative of the Architecture of Verona," 1870; "Fors Clavigera," 1871-84; "Munera Pulveris," 1872; "Aratra Pentelici," 1872; "Instructions in Elementary Drawing," 1872; "The Relation between Michael Angelo and Tintoret," 1872; "The Eagle's Nest," 1872; "Monuments of the Cavalli Family," 1872; "The Nature and Authority of Miracle" (from the "Contemporary Review"), 1873; "Val D'Arno," 1874; "Mornings in Florence" (in parts), 1875-7; "Proserpina" (in parts), 1875-86; Vol. I., 1879; "Deucalion" (in parts), 1875-1883; Vol. I., 1879; Vol. II. (two parts only), 1880, 1883; "Ariadne Florentina," 1876; "Letters to the 'Times' on Pre-Raphaelite Pictures in the Exhibition of 1854," 1876; "Yewdale and its Streamlets," 1877; "St. Mark's Rest" (3 parts), 1877-9, 1884; "Guide to Pictures in the Academy of Arts, Venice," 1877; "Notes on the Turner Exhibition," 1878; "The Laws of Fésole" (four parts, 1877-8), 1879; "Notes on the Prout and Hunt Exhibition," 1879-80; "Circular respecting the Memorial Studies at St. Mark's," 1879-80; "Letters to the Clergy" (Lord's Prayer and the Church), 1879, 1880; "Arrows of the Chace," 2 vols., 1880; "Elements of English Prosody," 1880; "The Bible of Amiens," 1884 (first published in parts); "Love's Meinie" (Lectures delivered at Oxford, 1873-81), 1881; "Catalogue of Drawings and Sketches by Turner in the National Gallery," 1881; "Catalogue of

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Works, in eleven volumes, 1871-83; Library Edition, edited by E. T. Cook and A. Wedderburn, 1903, etc.

For Life, see W. G. Collingwood: "John Ruskin, a Biographical Outline," 1889; "Life and Work of John Ruskin," 1893; "Life of John Ruskin," 1900; Frederic Harrison: "English Men of Letters," 1902.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
PRE-RAPHAELITISM	I
LECTURES ON ARCHITECTURE AND PAINTING	49
ACADEMY NOTES. Nos I-V	175
NOTES ON THE TURNER GALLERY	345
INDEX	406

Bibliography

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
PRE-RAPHAELITISM	I
LECTURES ON ARCHITECTURE AND PAINTING	49
ACADEMY NOTES. Nos I-V	175
NOTES ON THE TURNER GALLERY	345
INDEX	406

PRE-RAPHAELITISM

FRANCIS HAWKSWORTH FAWKES, ESQ.,
OF FARNLEY,

These Pages,

WHICH OWE THEIR PRESENT FORM TO ADVANTAGES GRANTED
BY HIS KINDNESS,

ARE AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED,

BY HIS OBLIGED FRIEND,

JOHN RUSKIN.

PREFACE

EIGHT years ago, in the close of the first volume of “Modern Painters,” I ventured to give the following advice to the young artists of England :—

“They should go to nature in all singleness of heart, and walk with her laboriously and trustingly, having no other thought but how best to penetrate her meaning ; rejecting nothing, selecting nothing, and scorning nothing.” Advice which, whether bad or good, involved infinite labour and humiliation in the following it ; and was therefore, for the most part, rejected.

It has, however, at last been carried out, to the very letter, by a group of men who, for their reward, have been assailed with the most scurrilous abuse which I ever recollect seeing issue from the public press. I have, therefore, thought it due to them to contradict the directly false statements which have been made respecting their works ; and to point out the kind of merit which, however deficient in some respects, those works possess beyond the possibility of dispute.

DENMARK HILL,
Aug. 1851.

PRE-RAPHAELITISM

IT may be proved, with much certainty, that God intends no man to live in this world without working : but it seems to me no less evident that He intends every man to be happy in his work. It is written, "in the sweat of thy brow," but it was never written, "in the breaking of thine heart," thou shalt eat bread : and I find that, as on the one hand, infinite misery is caused by idle people, who both fail in doing what was appointed for them to do, and set in motion various springs of mischief in matters in which they should have no concern, so on the other hand, no small misery is caused by over-worked and unhappy people, in the dark views which they necessarily take up themselves, and force upon others, of work itself. Were it not so, I believe the fact of their being unhappy is in itself a violation of divine law, and a sign of some kind of folly or sin in their way of life. Now in order that people may be happy in their work, these three things are needed : They must be fit for it : They must not do too much of it : and they must have a sense of success in it—not a doubtful sense, such as needs some testimony of other people, for its confirmation, but a sure sense, or rather knowledge, that so much work has been done well, and fruitfully done, whatever the world may say or think about it. So that in order that a man may be happy, it is necessary that he should not only be capable of his work, but a good judge of his work.

The first thing then that he has to do, if unhappily his parents or masters have not done it for him, is to find out what he is fit for. In which inquiry a man may be very safely guided by his likings, if he be not also guided by his pride. People usually reason in some such fashion as this : "I don't seem quite fit for a head-manager in the firm of _____ & Co., therefore, in all probability, I am fit to be Chancellor of the Exchequer." Whereas, they ought rather to reason thus : "I don't seem quite fit to be head-manager in the firm of _____ & Co., but I dare say I might do something in a small greengrocery business ; I used to be a

good judge of peas;" that is to say, always trying lower instead of trying higher, until they find bottom: once well set on the ground, a man may build up by degrees, safely, instead of disturbing every one in his neighbourhood by perpetual catastrophes. But this kind of humility is rendered especially difficult in these days, by the contumely thrown on men in humble employments. The very removal of the massy bars which once separated one class of society from another, has rendered it tenfold more shameful in foolish people's, i. e. in most people's eyes, to remain in the lower grades of it, than ever it was before. When a man born of an artisan was looked upon as an entirely different species of animal from a man born of a noble, it made him no more uncomfortable or ashamed to remain that different species of animal, than it makes a horse ashamed to remain a horse, and not to become a giraffe. But now that a man may make money, and rise in the world, and associate himself, unreproached, with people once far above him, not only is the natural discontentedness of humanity developed to an unheard-of extent, whatever a man's position, but it becomes a veritable shame to him to remain in the state he was born in, and everybody thinks it his *duty* to try to be a "gentleman." Persons who have any influence in the management of public institutions for charitable education know how common this feeling has become. Hardly a day passes but they receive letters from mothers who want all their six or eight sons to go to college, and make the grand tour in the long vacation, and who think there is something wrong in the foundations of society, because this is not possible. Out of every ten letters of this kind, nine will allege, as the reason of the writer's importunity, their desire to keep their families in such and such a "station of life." There is no real desire for the safety, the discipline, or the moral good of the children, only a panic horror of the inexpressibly pitiable calamity of their living a ledge or two lower on the molehill of the world—a calamity to be averted at any cost whatever, of struggle, anxiety, and shortening of life itself. I do not believe that any greater good could be achieved for the country, than the change in public feeling on this head, which might be brought about by a few benevolent men, undeniably in the class of "gentlemen," who would, on principle, enter into some of our commonest trades, and

make them honourable ; showing that it was possible for a man to retain his dignity, and remain, in the best sense, a gentleman, though part of his time was every day occupied in manual labour, or even in serving customers over a counter. I do not in the least see why courtesy, and gravity, and sympathy with the feelings of others, and courage, and truth, and piety, and what else goes to make up a gentleman's character, should not be found behind a counter as well as elsewhere, if they were demanded or even hoped for, there.

Let us suppose, then, that the man's way of life and manner of work have been discreetly chosen ; then the next thing to be required is, that he do not over-work himself therein. I am not going to say anything here about the various errors in our systems of society and commerce, which appear (I am not sure if they ever do more than appear) to force us to over-work ourselves merely that we may live ; nor about the still more fruitful cause of unhealthy toil—the incapability, in many men, of being content with the little that is indeed necessary to their happiness. I have only a word or two to say about one special cause of over-work—the ambitious desire of doing great or clever things, and the hope of accomplishing them by immense efforts : hope as vain as it is pernicious ; not only making men over-work themselves, but rendering all the work they do unwholesome to them. I say it is a vain hope, and let the reader be assured of this (it is a truth all-important to the best interests of humanity). *No great intellectual thing was ever done by great effort* ; a great thing can only be done by a great man, and he does it *without* effort. Nothing is, at present, less understood by us than this—nothing is more necessary to be understood. Let me try to say it as clearly, and explain it as fully as I may.

I have said no great *intellectual* thing : for I do not mean the assertion to extend to things moral. On the contrary, it seems to me that just because we are intended, as long as we live, to be in a state of intense moral effort, we are *not* intended to be in intense physical or intellectual effort. Our full energies are to be given to the soul's work—to the great fight with the Dragon—the taking the kingdom of heaven by force. But the body's work and head's work are to be done quietly, and comparatively without effort.

Neither limbs nor brain are ever to be strained to their utmost ; that is not the way in which the greatest quantity of work is to be got out of them : they are never to be worked furiously, but with tranquillity and constancy. We are to follow the plough from sunrise to sunset, but not to pull in race-boats at the twilight : we shall get no fruit of that kind of work, only disease of the heart.

How many pangs would be spared to thousands, if this great truth and law were but once sincerely, humbly understood.—that if a great thing can be done at all, it can be done easily : that, when it is needed to be done, there is perhaps only one man in the world who can do it ; but *he* can do it without any trouble—without more trouble, that is, than it costs small people to do small things ; nay, perhaps, with less. And yet what truth lies more openly on the surface of all human phenomena ? Is not the evidence of Ease on the very front of all the greatest works in existence ? Do they not say plainly to us, not, “there has been a great *effort* here,” but, “there has been a great *power* here ?” It is not the weariness of mortality, but the strength of divinity, which we have to recognise in all mighty things ; and that is just what we now *never* recognise, but think that we are to do great things, by help of iron bars and perspiration :—alas ! we shall do nothing that way but lose some pounds of our own weight.

Yet let me not be misunderstood, nor this great truth be supposed anywise resolvable into the favourite dogma of young men, that they need not work if they have genius. The fact is that a man of genius is always far more ready to work than other people, and gets so much more good from the work that he does, and is often so little conscious of the inherent divinity in himself, that he is very apt to ascribe all his capacity to his work, and to tell those who ask how he came to be what he is : “If I *am* anything, which I much doubt, I made myself so merely by labour.” This was Newton’s way of talking, and I suppose it would be the general tone of men whose genius had been devoted to the physical sciences. Genius in the Arts must commonly be more self-conscious, but in whatever field, it will always be distinguished by its perpetual, steady, well-directed, happy, and faithful labour in accumulating and disciplining its powers, as well as by its gigantic, incommunicable facility in

exercising them. Therefore, literally, it is no man's business whether he has genius or not: work he must, whatever he is, but quietly and steadily; and the natural and unforced results of such work will be always the things that God meant him to do, and will be his best. No agonies nor heart-rendings will enable him to do any better. If he be a great man, they will be great things; if a small man, small things; but always, if thus peacefully done, good and right; always, if restlessly and ambitiously done, false, hollow, and despicable.

Then the third thing needed was, I said, that a man should be a good judge of his work; and this chiefly that he may not be dependent upon popular opinion for the manner of doing it, but also that he may have the just encouragement of the sense of progress, and an honest consciousness of victory: how else can he become

“That awful independent on to-morrow,
Whose yesterdays look backwards with a smile.”

I am persuaded that the real nourishment and help of such a feeling as this is nearly unknown to half the workmen of the present day. For whatever appearance of self-complacency there may be in their outward bearing, it is visible enough, by their feverish jealousy of each other, how little confidence they have in the sterling value of their several doings. Conceit may puff a man up, but never prop him up; and there is too visible distress and hopelessness in men's aspects to admit of the supposition that they have any stable support of faith in themselves.

I have stated these principles generally, because there is no branch of labour to which they do not apply: But there is one in which our ignorance or forgetfulness of them has caused an incalculable amount of suffering: and I would endeavour now to reconsider them with especial reference to it,—the branch of the Arts.

In general, the men who are employed in the Arts have freely chosen their profession, and suppose themselves to have special faculty for it; yet, as a body, they are not happy men. For which this seems to me the reason,—that they are expected, and themselves expect, to make their bread *by being clever*—not by steady or quiet work; and are,

therefore, for the most part, trying to be clever, and so living in an utterly false state of mind and action.

This is the case, to the same extent, in no other profession or employment. A lawyer may indeed suspect that, unless he has more wit than those around him, he is not likely to advance in his profession; but he will not be always thinking how he is to display his wit. He will generally understand, early in his career, that wit must be left to take care of itself, and that it is hard knowledge of law and vigorous examination and collation of the facts of every case entrusted to him, which his clients will mainly demand: this it is which he is to be paid for; and this is healthy and measurable labour, payable by the hour. If he happen to have keen natural perception and quick wit, these will come into play in their due time and place, but he will not think of them as his chief power; and if he have them not, he may still hope that industry and conscientiousness may enable him to rise in his profession without them. Again in the case of clergymen: that they are sorely tempted to display their eloquence or wit, none who know their own hearts will deny, but then they *know* this to be a temptation: they never would suppose that cleverness was all that was to be expected from them, or would sit down deliberately to write a clever sermon: even the dullest or vainest of them would throw some veil over their vanity, and pretend to some profitableness of purpose in what they did. They would not openly ask of their hearers—Did you think my sermon ingenious, or my language poetical? They would early understand that they were not paid for being ingenious, nor called to be so, but to preach truth; that if they happened to possess wit, eloquence, or originality, these would appear and be of service in due time, but were not to be continually sought after or exhibited; and if it should happen that they had them not, they might still be serviceable pastors without them.

Not so with the unhappy artist. No one expects any honest or useful work of him; but every one expects him to be ingenious. Originality, dexterity, invention, imagination, everything is asked of him except what alone is to be had for asking—honesty and sound work, and the due discharge of his function as a painter. What function? asks the reader in some surprise. He may well ask; for I

suppose few painters have any idea what their function is, or even that they have any at all.

And yet surely it is not so difficult to discover. The faculties, which when a man finds in himself, he resolves to be a painter, are, I suppose, intensesness of observation and facility of imitation. The man is created an observer and an imitator ; and his function is to convey knowledge to his fellow-men, of such things as cannot be taught otherwise than ocularly. For a long time this function remained a religious one : it was to impress upon the popular mind the reality of the objects of faith, and the truth of the histories of Scripture, by giving visible form to both: That function has now passed away, and none has as yet taken its place. The painter has no profession, no purpose. He is an idler on the earth, chasing the shadows of his own fancies.

But he was never meant to be this. The sudden and universal Naturalism, or inclination to copy ordinary natural objects, which manifested itself among the painters of Europe, at the moment when the invention of printing superseded their legendary labours, was no false instinct. It was misunderstood and misapplied, but it came at the right time, and has maintained itself through all kinds of abuse ; presenting, in the recent schools of landscape, perhaps only the first fruits of its power. That instinct was urging every painter in Europe at the same moment to his true duty—*the faithful representation of all objects of historical interest, or of natural beauty existent at the period* ; representation such as might at once aid the advance of the sciences, and keep faithful record of every monument of past ages which was likely to be swept away in the approaching eras of revolutionary change.

The instinct came, as I said, exactly at the right moment ; and let the reader consider what amount and kind of general knowledge might by this time have been possessed by the nations of Europe, had their painters understood and obeyed it. Suppose that, after disciplining themselves so as to be able to draw, with unerring precision, each the particular kind of subject in which he most delighted, they had separated into two great armies of historians and naturalists ; —that the first had painted with absolute faithfulness every edifice, every city, every battle-field, every scene of the slightest historical interest, precisely and completely

rendering their aspect at the time ; and that their companions, according to their several powers, had painted with like fidelity the plants and animals, the natural scenery, and the atmospheric phenomena of every country on the earth—suppose that a faithful and complete record were now in our museums of every building destroyed by war, or time, or innovation, during these last 200 years—suppose that each recess of every mountain chain of Europe had been penetrated, and its rocks drawn with such accuracy that the geologist's diagram was no longer necessary—suppose that every tree of the forest had been drawn in its noblest aspect, every beast of the field in its savage life—that all these gatherings were already in our national galleries, and that the painters of the present day were labouring, happily and earnestly, to multiply them, and put such means of knowledge more and more within reach of the common people—would not that be a more honourable life for them, than gaining precarious bread by “bright effects?” They think not, perhaps. They think it easy, and therefore contemptible, to be truthful ; they have been taught so all their lives. But it is not so, whoever taught it them. It is most difficult, and worthy of the greatest men's greatest effort, to render, as it should be rendered, the simplest of the natural features of the earth ; but also be it remembered, no man is confined to the simplest ; each may look out work for himself where he chooses, and it will be strange if he cannot find something hard enough for him. The excuse is, however, one of the lips only ; for every painter knows, that when he draws back from the attempt to render nature as she is, it is oftener in cowardice than in disdain.

I must leave the reader to pursue this subject for himself ; I have not space to suggest to him the tenth part of the advantages which would follow, both to the painter from such an understanding of his mission, and to the whole people, in the results of his labour. Consider how the man himself would be elevated ; how content he would become, how earnest, how full of all accurate and noble knowledge, how free from envy—knowing creation to be infinite, feeling at once the value of what he did, and yet the nothingness. Consider the advantage to the people : the immeasurably larger interest given to art itself ; the easy, pleasurable, and perfect knowledge conveyed by it, in every subject ; the far

greater number of men who might be healthily and profitably occupied with it as a means of livelihood ; the useful direction of myriads of inferior talents, now left fading away in misery. Conceive all this, and then look around at our exhibitions, and behold the “cattle pieces,” and “sea pieces,” and “fruit pieces,” and “family pieces ;” the eternal brown cows in ditches, and white sails in squalls, and sliced lemons in saucers, and foolish faces in simpers ; —and try to feel what we are, and what we might have been.

Take a single instance in one branch of archaeology. Let those who are interested in the history of Religion consider what a treasure we should now have possessed, if, instead of painting pots, and vegetables, and drunken peasantry, the most accurate painters of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had been set to copy, line for line, the religious and domestic sculpture on the German, Flemish, and French cathedrals and castles ; and if every building destroyed in the French or in any other subsequent revolution, had thus been drawn in all its parts with the same precision with which Gerard Douw or Mieris paint basreliefs of Cupids. Consider, even now, what incalculable treasure is still left in ancient basreliefs, full of every kind of legendary interest, of subtle expression, of priceless evidence as to the character, feelings, habits, histories, of past generations, in neglected and shattered churches and domestic buildings, rapidly disappearing over the whole of Europe—treasure which, once lost, the labour of all men living cannot bring back again ; and then look at the myriads of men, with skill enough, if they had but the commonest schooling, to record all this faithfully, who are making their bread by drawing dances of naked women from academy models, or idealities of chivalry fitted out with Wardour Street armour, or eternal scenes from Gil Blas, Don Quixote, and the Vicar of Wakefield, or mountain sceneries with young idiots of Londoners wearing Highland bonnets and brandishing rifles in the foregrounds. Do but think of these things in the breadth of their inexpressible imbecility, and then go and stand before that broken basrelief in the southern gate of Lincoln Cathedral, and see if there is no fibre of the heart in you that will break too.

But is there to be no place left, it will be indignantly asked, for imagination and invention, for poetical power,

at love of ideal beauty? Yes; the highest, the noblest love—that which these only can attain when they are all used in the cause, and with the aid of truth. Wherever imagination and sentiment are, they will either show themselves without forcing, or, if capable of artificial development, the kind of training which such a school of art would give them would be the best they could receive. The infinite absurdity and failure of our present training consists mainly in this, that we do not rank imagination and invention high enough, and suppose that they *can* be taught. Throughout every sentence that I ever have written, the reader will find the same rank attributed to these powers,—the rank of a purely divine gift, not to be attained, increased, or in anywise modified by teaching, only in various ways capable of being concealed or quenched. Understand this thoroughly: know once for all, that a poet on canvas is exactly the same species of creature as a poet in song, and nearly every error in our methods of teaching will be done away with. For who among us now thinks of bringing men up to be poets?—of producing poets by any kind of general recipe or method of cultivation? Suppose even that we see in a youth that which we hope may, in its development, become a power of this kind, should we instantly, supposing that we wanted to make a poet of him, and nothing else, forbid him all quiet, steady, rational labour? Should we force him to perpetual spinning of new crudities out of his boyish brain, and set before him, as the only objects of his study, the laws of versification which criticism has supposed itself to discover in the works of previous writers? Whatever gifts the boy had, would much be likely to come of them so treated? unless, indeed, they were so great as to break through all such snares of falsehood and vanity, and build their own foundation in spite of us; whereas if, as in cases numbering millions against units, the natural gifts were too weak to do this, could anything come of such training but utter inanity and spuriousness of the whole man? But if we had sense, should we not rather restrain and bridle the first flame of invention in early youth, heaping material on it as one would on the first sparks and tongues of a fire which we desired to feed into greatness? Should we not educate the whole intellect into general strength, and all the affections into warmth and honesty,

and look to heaven for the rest? This, I say, we should have sense enough to do, in order to produce a poet in words: but, it being required to produce a poet on canvas, what is our way of setting to work? We begin, in all probability, by telling the youth of fifteen or sixteen, that Nature is full of faults, and that he is to improve her; but that Raphael is perfection, and that the more he copies Raphael the better; that after much copying of Raphael, he is to try what he can do himself in a Raphaelesque, but yet original, manner: that is to say, he is to try to do something very clever, all out of his own head, but yet this clever something is to be properly subjected to Raphaelesque rules, is to have a principal light occupying one-seventh of its space, and a principal shadow occupying one-third of the same; that no two people's heads in the picture are to be turned the same way, and that all the personages represented are to possess ideal beauty of the highest order, which ideal beauty consists partly in a Greek outline of nose, partly in proportions expressible in decimal fractions between the lips and chin; but partly also in that degree of improvement which the youth of sixteen is to bestow upon God's work in general. This I say is the kind of teaching which through various channels, Royal Academy lecturings, press criticisms, public enthusiasm, and not least by solid weight of gold, we give to our young men. And we wonder we have no painters!

But we do worse than this. Within the last few years some sense of the real tendency of such teaching has appeared in some of our younger painters. It only *could* appear in the younger ones, our older men having become familiarised with the false system, or else having passed through it and forgotten it, not well knowing the degree of harm they had sustained. This sense appeared, among our youths,—increased,—matured into resolute action. Necessarily, to exist at all, it needed the support both of strong instincts and of considerable self-confidence, otherwise it must at once have been borne down by the weight of general authority and received canon law. Strong instincts are apt to make men strange, and rude; self-confidence, however well founded, to give much of what they do or say the appearance of impertinence. Look at the self-confidence of Wordsworth, stiffening every other sentence of his prefaces into defiance; there is no more of it than was needed to

enable him to do his work, yet it is not a little ungraceful here and there. Suppose this stubbornness and self-trust in a youth, labouring in an art of which the executive part is confessedly to be best learnt from masters, and we shall hardly wonder that much of his work has a certain awkwardness and stiffness in it, or that he should be regarded with disfavour by many, even the most temperate, of the judges trained in the system he was breaking through, and with utter contempt and reprobation by the envious and the dull. Consider, farther, that the particular system to be overthrown was, in the present case, one of which the main characteristic was the pursuit of beauty at the expense of manliness and truth ; and it will seem likely, *a priori*, that the men intended successfully to resist the influence of such a system should be endowed with little natural sense of beauty, and thus rendered dead to the temptation it presented. Summing up these conditions, there is surely little cause for surprise that pictures painted, in a temper of resistance, by exceedingly young men, of stubborn instincts and positive self-trust, and with little natural perception of beauty, should not be calculated, at the first glance, to win us from works enriched by plagiarism, polished by convention, invested with all the attractiveness of artificial grace, and recommended to our respect by established authority.

We should however, on the other hand, have anticipated, that in proportion to the strength of character required for the effort, and to the absence of distracting sentiments, whether respect for precedent, or affection for ideal beauty, would be the energy exhibited in the pursuit of the special objects which the youths proposed to themselves, and their success in attaining them.

All this has actually been the case, but in a degree which it would have been impossible to anticipate. That two youths, of the respective ages of eighteen and twenty, should have conceived for themselves a totally independent and sincere method of study, and enthusiastically persevered in it against every kind of dissuasion and opposition, is strange enough ; that in the third or fourth year of their efforts they should have produced works in many parts not inferior to the best of Albert Durer, this is perhaps not less strange. But the loudness and universality of the howl which the common critics of the press have raised against them, the

utter absence of all generous help or encouragement from those who can both measure their toil and appreciate their success, and the shrill, shallow laughter of those who can do neither the one nor the other,—these are strangest of all—unimaginable unless they had been experienced.

And as if these were not enough, private malice is at work against them, in its own small, slimy way. The very day after I had written my second letter to the Times in the defence of the Pre-Raphaelites, I received an anonymous letter respecting one of them, from some person apparently hardly capable of spelling, and about as vile a specimen of petty malignity as ever blotted paper. I think it well that the public should know this, and so get some insight into the sources of the spirit which is at work against these men—how first roused it is difficult to say, for one would hardly have thought that mere eccentricity in young artists could have excited an hostility so determined and so cruel;—hostility which hesitated at no assertion, however impudent. That of the “absence of perspective” was one of the most curious pieces of the hue and cry which began with the Times, and died away in feeble maundering in the Art Union; I contradicted it in the Times—I here contradict it directly for the second time. There was not a single error in perspective in three out of the four pictures in question. But if otherwise, would it have been anything remarkable in them? I doubt, if, with the exception of the pictures of David Roberts, there were one architectural drawing in perspective on the walls of the Academy; I never met but with two men in my life who knew enough of perspective to draw a Gothic arch in a retiring plane, so that its lateral dimensions and curvatures might be calculated to scale from the drawing. Our architects certainly do not, and it was but the other day that, talking to one of the most distinguished among them, the author of several most valuable works, I found he actually did not know how to draw a circle in perspective. And in this state of general science our writers for the press take it upon them to tell us, that the forest-trees in Mr. Hunt's *Sylvia*, and the bunches of lilies in Mr. Collins's *Convent Thoughts*, are out of perspective.¹

¹ It was not a little curious, that in the very number of the Art Union which repeated this direct falsehood about the Pre-Raphaelite rejection

It might not, I think, in such circumstances, have been ungraceful or unwise in the Academicians themselves to have defended their young pupils, at least by the contradiction of statements directly false respecting them,¹ and the direction of the mind and sight of the public to such real merit as they possess. If Sir Charles Eastlake, Mulready, Edwin and Charles Landseer, Cope, and Dyce would each of them simply state their own private opinion respecting

of "linear perspective" (by-the-bye, the next time J. B. takes upon him to speak of any one connected with the Universities, he may as well first ascertain the difference between a Graduate and an Under-Graduate), the second plate given should have been of a picture of Bonington's,—a professional landscape painter, observe,—for the want of *aerial* perspective, in which the Art Union itself was obliged to apologise, and in which the artist has committed nearly as many blunders in *linear* perspective as there are lines in the picture.

¹ These false statements may be reduced to three principal heads, and directly contradicted in succession.

The first, the current fallacy of society as well as of the press, was, that the Pre-Raphaelites imitated the *errors* of early painters.

A falsehood of this kind could not have obtained credence anywhere but in England, few English people, comparatively, having ever seen a picture of early Italian Masters. If they had, they would have known that the Pre-Raphaelite pictures are just as superior to the early Italian in skill of manipulation, power of drawing, and knowledge of effect, as inferior to them in grace of design ; and that in a word, there is not a shadow of resemblance between the two styles. The Pre-Raphaelites imitate no pictures : they paint from nature only. But they have opposed themselves as a body, to that kind of teaching above described, which only began after Raphael's time : and they have opposed themselves as sternly to the entire feeling of the Renaissance schools ; a feeling compounded of indolence, infidelity, sensuality, and shallow pride. Therefore they have called themselves Pre-Raphaelite. If they adhere to their principles, and paint nature as it is around them, with the help of modern science, with the earnestness of the men of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, they will, as I said, found a new and noble school in England. If their sympathies with the early artists led them into mediævalism or Romanism, they will of course come to nothing. But I believe there is no danger of this, at least for the strongest among them. There may be some weak ones, whom the Tractarian heresies may touch ; but if so, they will drop off like decayed branches from a strong stem. I hope all things from the school.

The second falsehood was, that the Pre-Raphaelites did not draw well. This was asserted, and could have been asserted only by persons who had never looked at the pictures.

The third falsehood was, that they had no system of light and shade. To which it may be simply replied that their system of light and shade is exactly the same as the Sun's ; which is, I believe, likely to outlast that of the Renaissance, however brilliant.

their paintings, sign it, and publish it, I believe the act would be of more service to English art than anything the Academy has done since it was founded. But as I cannot hope for this, I can only ask the public to give their pictures careful examination, and to look at them at once with the indulgence and the respect which I have endeavoured to show they deserve.

Yet let me not be misunderstood. I have adduced them only as examples of the kind of study which I would desire to see substituted for that of our modern schools, and of singular success in certain characters, finish of detail, and brilliancy of colour. What faculties, higher than imitative, may be in these men, I do not yet venture to say ; but I do say, that if they exist, such faculties will manifest themselves in due time all the more forcibly because they have received training so severe.

For it is always to be remembered that no one mind is like another, either in its powers or perceptions ; and while the main principles of training must be the same for all, the result in each will be as various as the kinds of truth which each will apprehend ; therefore, also, the modes of effort, even in men whose inner principles and final aims are exactly the same. Suppose, for instance, two men, equally honest, equally industrious, equally impressed with a humble desire to render some part of what they saw in nature faithfully ; and, otherwise, trained in convictions such as I have above endeavoured to induce. But one of them is quiet in temperament, has a feeble memory, no invention, and excessively keen sight. The other is impatient in temperament, has a memory which nothing escapes, an invention which never rests, and is comparatively near-sighted.

Set them both free in the same field in a mountain valley. One sees everything, small and large, with almost the same clearness ; mountains and grasshoppers alike ; the leaves on the branches, the veins in the pebbles, the bubbles in the stream ; but he can remember nothing, and invent nothing. Patiently he sets himself to his mighty task ; abandoning at once all thoughts of seizing transient effects, or giving general impressions of that which his eyes present to him in microscopical dissection, he chooses some small portion out of the infinite scene, and calculates with courage the number of weeks which must elapse before he can do justice to the

intensity of his perceptions, or the fulness of matter in his subject.

Meantime, the other has been watching the change of the clouds, and the march of the light along the mountain sides ; he beholds the entire scene in broad, soft masses of true gradation, and the very feebleness of his sight is in some sort an advantage to him, in making him more sensible of the aerial mystery of distance, and hiding from him the multitudes of circumstances which it would have been impossible for him to represent. But there is not one change in the casting of the jagged shadows along the hollows of the hills, but it is fixed on his mind for ever ; not a flake of spray has broken from the sea of cloud about their bases, but he has watched it as it melts away, and could recall it to its lost place in heaven by the slightest effort of his thoughts. Not only so, but thousands and thousands of such images, of older scenes, remain congregated in his mind, each mingling in new associations with those now visibly passing before him, and these again confused with other images of his own ceaseless, sleepless imagination, flashing by in sudden troops. Fancy how his paper will be covered with stray symbols and blots, and undecipherable short-hand :—as for his sitting down to “ draw from Nature,” there was not one of the things which he wished to represent, that staid for so much as five seconds together : but none of them escaped, for all that : they are sealed up in that strange storehouse of his ; he may take one of them out perhaps, this day twenty years, and paint it in his dark room, far away. Now, observe, you may tell both of these men, when they are young, that they are to be honest, that they have an important function, and that they are not to care what Raphael did. This you may wholesomely impress on them both. But fancy the exquisite absurdity of expecting either of them to possess any of the qualities of the other.

I have supposed the feebleness of sight in the last, and of invention in the first painter, that the contrast between them might be more striking ; but, with very slight modification, both the characters are real. Grant to the first considerable inventive power, with exquisite sense of colour ; and give to the second, in addition to all his other faculties, the eye of an eagle ; and the first is John Everett Millais, the second Joseph Mallard William Turner.

Pre-Raphaelitism

They are among the few men who have defied all teaching, and have therefore, in great measure, done justice to the gifts with which they were entrusted. They stand opposite poles, marking culminating points of art in both directions; between them, or in various relations to them, we may class five or six more living artists who, in like manner, have done justice to their powers. I trust that it may be pardoned for naming them, in order that the reader may know how the strong innate genius in each has been invariably accompanied with the same humility, earnestness and industry in study.

It is hardly necessary to point out the earnestness and humility in the works of William Hunt; but it may be so well to suggest the high value they possess as records of English rural life, and *still* life. Who is there who for a moment could contend with him in the unaffected, yet humorous truth with which he has painted our peasant children? Who is there who does not sympathise with him in the simple love with which he dwells on the brightness and bloom of our summer fruit and flowers? And yet there is something to be regretted concerning him: why should he be allowed continually to paint the same bunches of his house grapes, and supply to the Water Colour Society the same succession of pineapples with the regularity of a Cove Garden fruiterer? He has of late discovered that primrose banks are lovely, but there are other things grow wild besides primroses: what undreamt-of loveliness might he not bring back to us, if he would lose himself for a summer in Highland and foregrounds; if he would paint the heather as it grows, and the foxglove and the harebell as they nestle in the clefts of the rocks, and the mosses and bright lichens of the rocks themselves. And then, cross to the Jura, and bring back a piece of Jura pasture in spring; with the gentians in their earliest blue, and a soldanelle beside the fading snow. And return again, and paint a grey wall of alpine crag, with budding roses crowning it like a wreath of rubies. That is what he was meant to do in this world; not to paint bouquets in China vases.

I have in various other places expressed my sincere respect for the works of Samuel Prout: his shortness of sight has necessarily prevented their possessing delicacy of finish or niceness of minor detail; but I think that those of no other

living artist furnish an example so striking of innate and special instinct, sent to do a particular work at the exact and only period when it was possible. At the instant when peace had been established all over Europe, but when neither national character nor national architecture had as yet been seriously changed by promiscuous intercourse or modern "improvement;" when, however, nearly every ancient and beautiful building had been long left in a state of comparative neglect, so that its aspect of partial ruinousness, and of separation from recent active life, gave to every edifice a peculiar interest—half sorrowful, half sublime;—at that moment Prout was trained among the rough rocks and simple cottages of Cornwall, until his eye was accustomed to follow with delight the rents and breaks, and irregularities which, to another man, would have been offensive; and then, gifted with infinite readiness in composition, but also with infinite affection for the kind of subjects he had to portray, he was sent to preserve, in an almost innumerable series of drawings, *every one made on the spot*, the aspect borne, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, by cities which, in a few years more, re-kindled wars, or unexpected prosperities, were to ravage, or renovate, into nothingness.

It seems strange to pass from Prout to John Lewis; but there is this fellowship between them, that both seem to have been intended to appreciate the characters of foreign countries more than of their own, nay, to have been born in England chiefly that the excitement of strangeness might enhance to them the interest of the scenes they had to represent. I believe John Lewis to have done more entire justice to all his powers, (and they are magnificent ones,) than any other man amongst us. His mission was evidently to portray the comparatively animal life of the southern and eastern families of mankind. For this, he was prepared in a somewhat singular way—by being led to study, and endowed with altogether peculiar apprehension of, the most sublime characters of animals themselves. Rubens, Rembrandt, Snyders, Tintoret, and Titian, have all, in various ways, drawn wild beasts magnificently; but they have in some sort humanised or demonised them, making them either ravenous fiends, or educated beasts, that would draw cars, and had respect for hermits. The sullen isolation of the brutal nature; the dignity and quietness of the mighty

limbs ; the shaggy mountainous power, mingled with grace as of a flowing stream ; the stealthy restraint of strength and wrath in every soundless motion of the gigantic frame ; all this seems never to have been seen, much less drawn, until Lewis drew and himself engraved a series of animal subjects, now many years ago. Since then, he has devoted himself to the portraiture of those European and Asiatic races, among whom the refinements of civilisation exist without its laws or its energies, and in whom the fierceness, indolence, and subtlety of animal nature are associated with brilliant imagination and strong affections. To this task he has brought not only intense perception of the kind of character, but powers of artistical composition like those of the great Venetians, displaying, at the same time, a refinement of drawing almost miraculous, and appreciable only, as the minutiae of nature itself are appreciable, by the help of the microscope. The value, therefore, of his works, as records of the aspect of the scenery and inhabitants of the south of Spain and of the East, in the earlier part of the nineteenth century, is quite above all estimate.

I hardly know how to speak of Mulready : in delicacy and completion of drawing, and splendour of colour, he takes place beside John Lewis and the Pre-Raphaelites ; but he has, throughout his career, displayed no definiteness in choice of subject. He must be named among the painters who have studied with industry, and have made themselves great by doing so ; but having obtained a consummate method of execution, he has thrown it away on subjects either altogether uninteresting, or above his powers, or unfit for pictorial representation. "The Cherry Woman," exhibited in 1850, may be named as an example of the first kind ; the "Burchell and Sophia" of the second (the character of Sir William Thornhill being utterly missed) ; the "Seven Ages" of the third ; for this subject cannot be painted. In the written passage, the thoughts are progressive and connected ; in the picture they must be co-existent, and yet separate ; nor can all the characters of the ages be rendered in painting at all. One may represent the soldier at the cannon's mouth, but one cannot paint the "bubble reputation" which he seeks. Mulready, therefore, while he has always produced exquisite pieces of painting, has failed in doing anything which can be of true

or extensive use. He has, indeed, understood how to discipline his genius, but never how to direct it.

Edwin Landseer is the last painter but one whom I shall name : I need not point out to any one acquainted with his earlier works, the labour, or watchfulness of nature which they involve, nor need I do more than allude to the peculiar faculties of his mind. It will at once be granted that the highest merits of his pictures are throughout found in those parts of them which are least like what had before been accomplished ; and that it was not by the study of Raphael that he attained his eminent success, but by a healthy love of Scotch terriers.

None of these painters, however, it will be answered, afford examples of the rise of the highest imaginative power out of close study of matters of fact. Be it remembered, however, that the imaginative power, in its magnificence, is not to be found every day. Lewis has it in no mean degree, but we cannot hope to find it at its highest more than once in an age. We *have* had it once, and must be content.

Towards the close of the last century, among the various drawings executed, according to the quiet manner of the time, in greyish blue, with brown foregrounds, some began to be noticed as exhibiting rather more than ordinary diligence and delicacy, signed W. Turner.¹ There was nothing, however, in them at all indicative of genius, or even of more than ordinary talent, unless in some of the subjects a large perception of space, and excessive clearness and decision in the arrangement of masses. Gradually and cautiously the blues became mingled with delicate green, and then with gold ; the browns in the foreground became first more positive, and then were slightly mingled with other local colours ; while the touch, which had at first been heavy and broken, like that of the ordinary drawing masters of the time, grew more and more refined and expressive, until it lost itself in a method of execution often too delicate for the eye to follow, rendering, with a precision before unexampled, both the texture and the form of every object. The style may be considered as perfectly formed about the year 1800, and it remained unchanged for twenty years.

¹ He did not use his full signature, J. M. W., until about the year 1800.

During that period the painter had attempted, and with more or less success had rendered, every order of landscape subject, but always on the same principle, subduing the colours of nature into a harmony of which the key-notes are greyish green and brown; pure blues, and delicate golden yellows being admitted in small quantity as the lowest and highest limits of shade and light: and bright local colours in extremely small quantity in figures or other minor accessories.

Pictures executed on such a system are not, properly speaking, works in *colour* at all; they are studies of light and shade, in which both the shade and the distance are rendered in the general hue which best expresses their attributes of coolness and transparency; and the lights and the foreground are executed in that which best expresses their warmth and solidity. This advantage may just as well be taken as not, in studies of light and shadow to be executed with the hand; but the use of two, three, or four colours, always in the same relations and places, does not in the least constitute the work a study of colour, any more than the brown engravings of the *Liber Studiorum*; nor would the idea of colour be in general more present to the artist's mind when he was at work on one of these drawings, than when he was using pure brown in the mezzotint engraving. But the idea of space, warmth, and freshness being not successfully expressible in a single tint, and perfectly expressible by the admission of three or four, he allows himself this advantage when it is possible, without in the least embarrassing himself with the actual colour of the objects to be represented. A stone in the foreground might in nature have been cold grey, but it will be drawn nevertheless of a rich brown, because it is in the foreground; a hill in the distance might in nature be purple with heath, or golden with furze; but it will be drawn, nevertheless, of a cool grey, because it is in the distance.

This at least was the general theory,—carried out with great severity in many, both of the drawings and pictures executed by him during the period: in others more or less modified by the cautious introduction of colour, as the painter felt his liberty increasing; for the system was evidently never considered as final, or as anything more than a means of progress: the conventional, easily manageable

colour, was visibly adopted, only that his mind might be at perfect liberty to address itself to the acquirement of the first and most necessary knowledge in art—that of form. But as form, in landscape, implies vast bulk and space, the use of the tints which enabled him best to express them, was actually auxiliary to the mere drawing ; and, therefore, not only permissible, but even necessary, while more brilliant or varied tints were never indulged in, except when they might be introduced without the slightest danger of diverting his mind for an instant from his principal object. And, therefore, it will be generally found in the works of this period, that exactly in proportion to the importance and general toil of the composition, is the severity of the tint ; and that the play of colour begins to show itself first in slight and small drawings, where he felt that he could easily secure all that he wanted in form.

Thus the “Crossing the Brook,” and such other elaborate and large compositions, are actually painted in nothing but grey, brown, and blue, with a point or two of severe local colour in the figures ; but in the minor drawings, tender passages of complicated colour occur not unfrequently in easy places ; and even before the year 1800 he begins to introduce it with evident joyfulness and longing in his rude and simple studies, just as a child, if it could be supposed to govern itself by a fully developed intellect, would cautiously, but with infinite pleasure, add now and then a tiny dish of fruit or other dangerous luxury to the simple order of its daily fare. Thus, in the foregrounds of his most severe drawings, we not unfrequently find him indulging in the luxury of a peacock ; and it is impossible to express the joyfulness with which he seems to design its graceful form, and deepen with soft pencilling the bloom of its blue, after he has worked through the stern detail of his almost colourless drawing. A rainbow is another of his most frequently permitted indulgences ; and we find him very early allowing the edges of his evening clouds to be touched with soft rose-colour or gold ; while, whenever the hues of nature in anywise fall into his system, and can be caught without a dangerous departure from it, he instantly throws his whole soul into the faithful rendering of them. Thus the usual brown tones of his foreground become warmed into sudden vigour, and are varied and enhanced with indescribable

delight, when he finds himself by the shore of a moorland stream, where they truly express the stain of its golden rocks, and the darkness of its clear, Cairngorm-like pools, and the usual serenity of his aerial blue is enriched into the softness and depth of the sapphire, when it can deepen the distant slumber of some Highland lake, or temper the gloomy shadows of the evening upon its hills.

The system of his colour being thus simplified, he could address all the strength of his mind to the accumulation of facts of form ; his choice of subject, and his methods of treatment, are therefore as various as his colour is simple ; and it is not a little difficult to give the reader who is unacquainted with his works, an idea either of their infinitude of aims, on the one hand, or of the kind of feeling which pervades them all, on the other. No subject was too low or too high for him : we find him one day hard at work on a cock and hen, with their family of chickens in a farm-yard ; and bringing all the refinement of his execution into play to express the texture of the plumage ; next day he is drawing the Dragon of Colchis. One hour he is much interested in a gust of wind blowing away an old woman's cap ; the next, he is painting the fifth plague of Egypt. Every landscape painter before him had acquired distinction by confining his efforts to one class of subject. Hobbima painted oaks ; Ruysdael, waterfalls and copses ; Cuyp, river or meadow scenes in quiet afternoons ; Salvator and Poussin, such kind of mountain scenery as people could conceive, who lived in towns in the seventeenth century. But I am well persuaded that if all the works of Turner, up to the year 1820, were divided into classes (as he has himself divided them in the *Liber Studiorum*), no preponderance could be assigned to one class over another. There is architecture, including a large number of formal "gentlemen's seats," I suppose drawings commissioned by the owners ; then lowland pastoral scenery of every kind, including nearly all farming operations—ploughing, harrowing, hedging and ditching, felling trees, sheep-washing, and I know not what else ; then all kinds of town life—courtyards of inns, starting of mail coaches, interiors of shops, house-buildings, fairs, elections, &c. ; then all kinds of inner domestic life—interiors of rooms, studies of costumes, of still life, and heraldry, including multitudes of symbolical

vignettes ; then marine scenery of every kind, full of local incident ; every kind of boat and method of fishing for particular fish, being specifically drawn, round the whole coast of England—pilchard fishing at St. Ives, whiting fishing at Margate, herring at Loch Fyne ; and all kinds of shipping, including studies of every separate part of the vessels, and many marine battle pieces, two in particular of Trafalgar, both of high importance,—one of the Victory after the battle, now in Greenwich Hospital ; another of the Death of Nelson, in his own gallery ; then all kinds of mountain scenery, some idealised into compositions, others of definite localities ; together with classical compositions, Romes and Carthages and such others, by the myriad, with mythological, historical, or allegorical figures,—nymphs, monsters, and spectres ; heroes and divinities.¹

What general feeling, it may be asked incredulously, can possibly pervade all this ? This, the greatest of all feelings—an utter forgetfulness of self. Throughout the whole period with which we are at present concerned, Turner appears as a man of sympathy absolutely infinite—a sympathy so all-embracing, that I know nothing but that of Shakespeare comparable with it. A soldier's wife resting by the roadside is not beneath it ; Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, watching the dead bodies of her sons, not above it. Nothing can possibly be so mean as that it will not interest his whole mind, and carrying away his whole heart ; nothing so great or solemn but that he can raise himself into harmony with it ; and it is impossible to prophesy of him at any moment, whether, the next, he will be in laughter or in tears.

This is the root of the man's greatness ; and it follows as a matter of course that this sympathy must give him a subtle power of expression, even of the characters of mere material things, such as no other painter ever possessed. The man who can best feel the difference between rudeness and tenderness in humanity, perceives also more difference between the branches of an oak and a willow than any one else would ; and, therefore, necessarily the most striking character of the drawings themselves is the speciality of whatever they represent—the thorough stiffness of what is stiff, and grace of what is graceful, and vastness of what is

¹ I shall give a *catalogue raisonné* of all this in the third volume of "Modern Painters."

vast ; but through and beyond all this, the condition of the mind of the painter himself is easily enough discoverable by comparison of a large number of the drawings. It is singularly serene and peaceful : in itself quite passionless, though entering with ease into the external passion which it contemplates. By the effort of its will it sympathises with tumult or distress, even in their extremes, but there is no tumult, no sorrow in itself, only a chastened and exquisitely peaceful cheerfulness, deeply meditative ; touched, without loss of its own perfect balance, by sadness on the one side, and stooping to playfulness upon the other. I shall never cease to regret the destruction, by fire, now several years ago, of a drawing which always seemed to me to be the perfect image of the painter's mind at this period,—the drawing of Brignal Church near Rokeby, of which a feeble idea may still be gathered from the engraving (in the Yorkshire series). The spectator stands on the "Brignal banks," looking down into the glen at twilight ; the sky is still full of soft rays, though the sun is gone, and the Greta glances brightly in the valley, singing its even-song : two white clouds, following each other, move without wind through the hollows of the ravine, and others lie couched on the far away moorlands ; every leaf of the woods is still in the delicate air ; a boy's kite, incapable of rising, has become entangled in their branches, he is climbing to recover it ; and just behind it in the picture, almost indicated by it, the lowly church is seen in its secluded field between the rocks and the stream ; and around it the low churchyard wall, and the few white stones which mark the resting places of those who can climb the rocks no more, nor hear the river sing as it passes.

There are many other existing drawings which indicate the same character of mind, though I think none so touching or so beautiful : yet they are not, as I said above, more numerous than those which express his sympathy with sublimer or more active scenes ; but they are almost always marked by a tenderness of execution, and have a look of being beloved in every part of them, which shows them to be the truest expression of his own feelings.

One other characteristic of his mind at this period remains to be noticed—its reverence for talent in others. Not the reverence which acts upon the practices of men as if they

were the laws of nature, but that which is ready to appreciate the power, and receive the assistance, of every mind which has been previously employed in the same direction, so far as its teaching seems to be consistent with the great text-book of nature itself. Turner thus studied almost every preceding landscape painter, chiefly Claude, Poussin, Vandervelde, Loutherbourg, and Wilson. It was probably by the Sir George Beaumonts and other feeble conventionalists of the period, that he was persuaded to devote his attention to the works of these men; and his having done so will be thought, a few scores of years hence, evidence of perhaps the greatest modesty ever shown by a man of original power. Modesty at once admirable and unfortunate, for the study of the works of Vandervelde and Claude was productive of unmixed mischief to him: he spoiled many of his marine pictures, as for instance Lord Ellesmere's, by imitation of the former; and from the latter learned a false ideal, which, confirmed by the notions of Greek art prevalent in London in the beginning of this century, has manifested itself in many vulgarities in his composition pictures, vulgarities which may perhaps be best expressed by the general term "Twickenham Classicism," as consisting principally in conceptions of ancient or of rural life such as have influenced the erection of most of our suburban villas. From Nicolo Poussin and Loutherbourg he seems to have derived advantage; perhaps also from Wilson; and much in his subsequent travels from far higher men, especially Tintoret and Paul Veronese. I have myself heard him speaking with singular delight of the putting in of the beech leaves in the upper right-hand corner of Titian's Peter Martyr. I cannot in any of his works trace the slightest influence of Salvator; and I am not surprised at it, for though Salvator was a man of far higher powers than either Vandervelde or Claude, he was a wilful and gross caricaturist. Turner would descend to be helped by feeble men, but could not be corrupted by false men. Besides, he had never himself seen classical life, and Claude was represented to him as competent authority for it. But he *had* seen mountains and torrents, and knew therefore that Salvator could not paint them.

One of the most characteristic drawings of this period fortunately bears a date, 1818, and brings us within two

years of another dated drawing, no less characteristic of what I shall henceforward call Turner's Second period. It is in the possession of Mr. Hawkesworth Fawkes of Farnley, one of Turner's earliest and truest friends; and bears the inscription, unusually conspicuous, heaving itself up and down over the eminences of the foreground—"PASSAGE OF MONT CENIS. J. M. W. TURNER, January 15th, 1820."

The scene is on the summit of the pass close to the hospice, or what seems to have been a hospice at that time,—I do not remember any such at present,—a small square-built house, built as if partly for a fortress, with a detached flight of stone steps in front of it, and a kind of drawbridge to the door. This building, about 400 or 500 yards off, is seen in a dim, ashy grey against the light, which by help of a violent blast of mountain wind has broken through the depth of clouds which hangs upon the crags. There is no sky, properly so called, nothing but this roof of drifting cloud; but neither is there any weight of darkness—the high air is too thin for it,—all savage, howling, and luminous with cold, the massy bases of the granite hills jutting out here and there grimly through the snow wreaths. There is a desolate-looking refuge on the left, with its number 16, marked on it in long ghastly figures, and the wind is drifting the snow off the roof and through its window in a frantic whirl; the near ground is all wan with half-thawed, half-trampled snow; a diligence in front, whose horses, unable to face the wind, have turned right round with fright, its passengers struggling to escape, jammed in the window; a little farther on is another carriage off the road, some figures pushing at its wheels and its driver at the horses' heads, pulling and lashing with all his strength, his lifted arm stretched out against the light of the distance, though too far off for the whip to be seen.

Now I am perfectly certain that any one thoroughly accustomed to the earlier works of the painter, and shown this picture for the first time, would be struck by two altogether new characters in it.

The first, a seeming enjoyment of the excitement of the scene, totally different from the contemplative philosophy with which it would formerly have been regarded. Every incident of motion and of energy is seized upon with